



ACCESS CURRENTS

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Board Proposes Guidelines for Federal Outdoor Developed Areas

The Board has released for public comment new accessibility guidelines for Federal parks and recreation areas. As proposed, the guidelines address access to new or altered trails, beaches, and picnic and camping areas on sites managed by the Federal government. Achieving accessibility in outdoor environments has long been a source of inquiry due to challenges and constraints posed by terrain, the degree of development, construction practices and materials, and other factors. In developing these guidelines, the Board seeks to clarify how, and to what extent, accessibility criteria can be applied to outdoor developed areas.



The guidelines specify where compliance is required and provide detailed technical criteria for achieving access. These specifications derive from existing Board guidelines for buildings and facilities, but have been modified and tailored for application to outdoor developed areas. Conditions that necessitate departures are recognized, including situations where meeting certain provisions would compromise natural features, require prohibited construction methods or materials, or be infeasible due to terrain. For example, a portion of a trail could be exempt from minimum width requirements where rock outcroppings or similar natural features restrict the trail width. (See next page.)

The guidelines were developed by a regulatory negotiation committee chartered by the Board. The Outdoor Developed Areas Regulatory Negotiation Committee's 27 members included representatives from parks and outdoor recreation associations, disability groups, state and Federal land management agencies, and others. This rulemaking approach enables interested groups and stakeholders to assume a leadership role in drafting a new regulation and provides a forum for different, and sometimes competing, interests to reach consensus on its substance. The Board's proposal substantively tracks the detailed specifications developed by the committee and submitted to the Board.

The guidelines would apply to sites developed or altered by Federal land management agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Army Corps of Engineers, among others. The Board intends to develop guidelines for outdoor developed areas controlled by non-Federal entities at a future date.

The guidelines, which are posted on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/outdoor/nprm/, are available for comment until October 18th. A notice published with the guidelines discusses the provisions, poses questions to the public on various issues, and includes instructions for providing comments. Comments can be submitted through the Board's website or by email, fax, or mail. In addition, the Board will hold public hearings on the guidelines in Denver on July 24th and in Washington, D.C. on September 6th. For further information, contact Bill Botten at botten@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0014 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Overview of the Proposed Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas

The guidelines would apply to outdoor developed areas constructed or altered by Federal land management agencies. Exemptions and departures from certain criteria are recognized where access would:

- substantially harm cultural, historic, religious, or significant natural features or characteristics;
- substantially alter the nature of the setting or its purpose;
- require prohibited construction methods or materials;
- be infeasible due to terrain or prevailing construction practices.

These exceptions apply primarily to requirements for trails. As proposed, they would permit departures only from those specifications that would pose one of the recognized conflicts. All other specifications would still apply.



Trails

Specifications for trails address firmness and stability, running and cross slopes, width, and other characteristics. They would apply to new trails or to altered portions of existing ones. Application would be limited to trails that already connect to designated trailheads or to existing accessible trails so that compliance results in a continuous accessible network. Exceptions and conditions permit departures where compliance would be difficult due to factors such as topography or would conflict with prevailing construction practices. For example, at sites where only natural surface materials are allowed, certain departures from criteria for firmness and stability may be allowed. To make compliance more feasible, some trail specifications differ considerably from existing Board guidelines for accessible routes, such as those permitting a steeper and more continuous running slope.



Beaches

The guidelines address beach access and would require access routes to the water's edge at intervals up to a half mile at new beaches. Accessible beach routes also would be required at redeveloped beaches that are served or bordered by pedestrian routes, such as a boardwalk. Criteria for these routes address surface, slope, width and other features and are similar to those for trails. Temporary beach routes would be permitted in alterations.

Picnic and Camping Areas

Scoping and technical requirements for picnic and camping elements are included in the guidelines. These provisions cover:

- picnic tables
- cooking surfaces
- overlooks and viewing areas
- utilities and sinks
- rinsing showers and pit toilets
- parking for camp sites and camping vehicles
- fire rings, fireplaces, and wood stoves
- trash containers
- benches
- warming huts
- signage



For most elements, access would be required to at least half the number provided in each area. The guidelines also address connecting accessible routes to these elements. Specifications for these routes are more stringent than those for trails since camping and picnic areas typically involve more site development and are subject to fewer accessibility challenges.

Supplementary Technical Provisions

The proposed guidelines are structured as a stand-alone document, although many provisions derive from existing facility guidelines. They include a section of supplementary technical provisions that address fundamental aspects of accessibility, such as wheelchair turning space and accessible reach ranges.

Denver Events
July 24, 2007
Westin Westminster
10600 Westminster Blvd.
Westminster, CO

Town Meeting
10:00 – 12:30

Public Hearing
(Outdoor Developed
Area Guidelines)
2:00 – 5:00

Board to Hold Town Meeting and Hearing in Denver

The Board will hold a town meeting and public hearing in the Denver area on July 24th. Each year the Board holds one of its bi-monthly meetings in a location outside the Washington, D.C. area to discuss various aspects of accessibility and the work of the Board. The town meeting will provide a forum for the public to advise the Board on accessibility and issues of concern pertaining to the built environment, transportation, communication, and information technology. The meeting will follow an open format but will also feature panel discussions on several topics, including kiosks, voting machines, and acoustics. On the same day, a public hearing will be held on the Board's proposed guidelines for Federal parks and other outdoor developed areas. The hearing will provide an opportunity for interested parties to provide comment on the proposed guidelines. Both events will be held at the Westin Hotel in Westminster, Colorado. For further information, contact Kathy Johnson at johnson@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0041 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Board to Name Advisory Panel on Emergency Transportable Housing

The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina exposed a number of shortcomings in the government's ability to respond to large-scale disasters, among them access to emergency housing. Working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and other agencies, the Board has examined the accessibility of trailers procured by the government to house those displaced by natural disasters. Access issues and constraints have been identified and explored in consultation with these agencies as well as disability groups and manufacturers.

The Board has determined the need to supplement its facility guidelines to tailor and clarify coverage of emergency transportable housing and plans to organize an advisory committee to assist in this effort. To ensure a balanced cross-section of interests, the committee will include representation from disability groups (including the Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, the National Council on Independent Living, and the United Spinal Association), industry and code groups (such as the Recreation Park Trailer Industry Association, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, the Manufactured Housing Institute, and the National Fire Protection Association), and government agencies (among them FEMA, HUD, and the Department of Justice). The Board published a notice on the formation of this committee and its proposed membership which is posted on the Board's website. For more information, contact Marsha Mazz at mazz@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0020 (v), or (202) 272-0081 (TTY).

New Advisory Committee to Examine Vessel Alarm Systems

As part of its effort to develop new guidelines for passenger vessels, the Board also plans to organize an advisory committee to develop recommendations for emergency alarm systems that are accessible to passengers with hearing impairments. Last year the Board released a draft of these guidelines, which cover access to ferries, cruise ships, and other classes of vessels. The draft guidelines addressed alarm systems to ensure that they are accessible to passengers with disabilities, including those with hearing impairments. Based on public comments received on the draft, the Board determined that existing vessel alarm systems and emergency notification procedures aboard vessels need to be further explored so that detailed specifications can be included in the guidelines. The committee will be comprised of representatives from disability organizations, particularly those representing people who are deaf or hard of hearing, the vessel and cruise ship industry and trade groups, and the National Fire Protection Association, among others. A notice on the creation of this committee is available on the Board's website. For further information, contact Paul Beatty at pvag@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0012 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Advisory Panel Advances Update of Section 508 Standards at Recent Meeting

The Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee (TEITAC), which will provide recommendations on updating the Board's accessibility criteria for electronic and information technology and telecommunications products, held its fourth meeting May 22 – 24 in the Washington, D.C. area. The committee made considerable progress in approving recommended changes for the Board's use in updating its section 508 standards for electronic and information technology and its Telecommunications Act guidelines. Members received reports from eight subcommittees, most of which cover different subject areas of the standards and guidelines, and discussed subcommittee recommendations, proposals, and next steps. The committee also deliberated on recommendations for a new framework and format for the standards that will improve usability and facilitate future updates.

The committee will continue to review subcommittee recommendations at its next meeting which will be held July 16 – 18 in the Washington, D.C. area. The committee plans to complete substantive deliberations at this meeting or at a following meeting in September. The July meeting, which is open to the public, will be held at the National Science Foundation (NSF), Room II-555, 4201 Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia. Persons wishing to attend must pre-register and follow NSF procedures, including its computer security policy.

For additional information, visit the committee's website at <http://teitac.org> or contact Timothy Creagan at creagan@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0016 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY). Information on the committee and meeting materials are also available on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/sec508/update-index.htm.

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

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